



## Selecting Books for Toddlers

### 18 months to four years

Children this age like stories! Their attention spans are still short, so choose stories that are fairly simple. Children this age like to have the same rhyme or poem repeated over and over. Stories that have the same word or phrase repeated throughout delight this age group. Soon you will be able to see their faces light up with joy and anticipation. Repetition will help develop memory and language skills.

Toddlers are learning about feelings. They are learning when it is all right to show how they feel. For example, they are learning that it is natural to feel angry sometimes, but that it is not okay to hit or punch others because they are mad. Since toddlers are becoming aware of feelings, they like to hear stories about them. They also are forming self-concepts and like to hear stories about toddlers who feel just like they do. Books that teach about body parts or people who are like those they know (like mothers, fathers, storekeepers, and pets) will help them learn about themselves and their worlds.

Because their small muscles, like those in their hands, are now more developed, toddlers can turn the thin pages of regular picture books. They should be allowed to do this because it makes them feel in control. At this age, they are able to see more things in the pictures. This is the time to let children look at the pictures for a longer time and talk to you about what they see. Children this age "read" the pictures. The best books for this age are well designed and have clear, uncluttered pages with lots of color to spur their imaginations.

The older children in this age group are beginning to know the difference between real and pretend, and think stories about dressed up and talking animals are great. After such a story you may want to ask, "Was that real or pretend?" You need not make a big deal about the difference between the two.

Toddlers always are active and are coordinated enough to enjoy pop-up books and other books they can take part in. They are still learning about ideas like up/down and in/out, so those books are appropriate now. Two-year-olds are ready to hear books about colors and shapes, and three-year-olds are ready to hear about numbers and letters.



## Books for Toddlers

Thinking and information books as well as short stories are good for this age group. Picture books, with one thing on a page (such as a picture of shoes or a dog) are good. Children can recognize these pictures, name them, and begin to learn about words. Counting, alphabet, and touch-and-see books also are favorites. Toddlers also enjoy books about true things told in story form, or pretend stories like those about talking animals. Mother Goose and Richard Scarry books are favorites now.

Ask for these and other books at your favorite library:

- *Barnyard Dance!* by Sandra Boynton
- *Down by the Station*, by Will Hillenbrand
- *From Head to Toe*, by Eric Carle
- *Hello, Baby!* by Mem Fox
- *Higher! Higher!* by Leslie Patricelli
- *I Went Walking*, by Vera Williams
- *iLibro!/Book!* by Kristine O'Connell George
- *Lola at the Library*, by Anna McQuinn
- *More More More Said the Baby*, by Vera Williams
- *My Shapes/Mis Formas*, by Rebecca Emberley
- *Old MacDonald*, by Rosemary Wells
- *Overboard!* by Sarah Weeks
- *Planting a Rainbow*, by Lois Ehlert
- *The Real Mother Goose*, by Blanche Fisher Wright
- *Time for Bed*, by Mem Fox
- *Toes, Ears and Nose*, by Karen Katz
- *Toot Toot Beep Beep*, by Emma Garcia
- *What Shall We Do With the Boo Hoo Baby?* by Cressida Crowell
- *Who Said Moo?* by Harriet Ziefert



## *How you can help*

Choose books that are short enough to be read in one sitting, and have happy endings. Since toddlers are unable to understand other people's point of view, you may want to substitute their names for the names of the main characters in the stories or poems. This will make them feel important and good about themselves. Another way to make them feel special is to hold them close during story time.

Toddlerhood is a time for exploring. You can help them do this by choosing books about the experiences that children (or even animals) have in the real world. Toddlers want independence, although, at this stage, they are not always able to handle much freedom. The stories you choose about exploring should be ones that will help them adjust to new and sometimes frightening experiences in their world. Two-and three-year-olds are talkative and have good imaginations. They will have many things to tell you while you are reading stories together! You can help by being a good listener.

Adapted with permission from the National Network for Child Care. From *Good times with stories and poems*, by Patricia A. Johnson, Ed. D. Fort Collins, CO: Colorado State University Cooperative Extension.